

Pledging aid from afar

by Rick Emert
Stars and Stripes

While an international outpouring of support is going to tsunami victims from online donations, some people from U.S. military communities in Europe are also doing their part to raise a little money for disaster relief efforts.

Roger Walker, a third-grader at Darmstadt Elementary School, went door-to-door in his Santa Barbara housing area in Germany to collect “pocket change” from the children of the house.

Walker, 9, said seeing the devastation in the countries hit by the tsunami compelled him to spend New Year’s Day pounding the pavement.

“I was watching the news and saw all these hurting people who don’t have any money, and I thought it would be a good idea to give them money.”

Collecting only from other kids, Walker raised \$114 and 38 euro.

“I figured that the adults would be asked elsewhere, like at the office or the unit,” Walker said. “I knocked on the door and asked if it was OK for the kids to donate their pocket change. The parents all said it was OK, and the kids gave me 50 cents or \$1 or \$20, or whatever they had.”

At the Rhein-Main Air Base commissary in Germany, head bagger Yupa Conway donated three days’ wages totaling \$660 and 40 euro.

Conway, the wife of a Stars and Stripes employee, initially put out a donation box, but the commissary management said it would make the customers uncomfortable and they may feel obligated to give more than they normally would have given for a tip.

Instead, Conway donated all of her tips.

“I am from Thailand, and my cousin still lives on the beach [where the tsunami hit],” she said. “I was scared, but we know now



photo by Michael Abrams

Roger Walker, a third-grader at Darmstadt Elementary School, collected \$114 and 38 euros from fellow children for tsunami victims.

that she is safe.”

Conway and her family visit the beach where her cousin lives every year. They last visited in July.

“All of the damage that was done there makes me cry,” Conway said. “I want to help the best that I can. I feel I have to try to help them.”

The money raised will be sent directly to the Thai ambassador to the United States in Washington, D.C. The embassy Web site (www.thaiembdc.org) has a routing and account number for people to donate money through their bank account.

In Bamberg, Germany, the American Red Cross office received many calls Monday from people who wanted to donate money or clothing, said Jennifer Pittard, field office assistant.

“All we are taking right now is donations of money, because what the people there need is food and water - the basics,” Pittard said.

She added that monetary donations could be made at any local field office of the American Red Cross on any military installation, and the money goes directly to tsunami and earthquake victims.

Donations can be made online at www.redcross.org. The

Web site also has a link for anyone seeking information on friends or family who were in the area when the earthquake and tsunami hit.

At Bamberg Elementary School, teachers were to hold a faculty meeting after school Monday - the first day back from winter break - to discuss some of the options for students who were interested in helping tsunami victims.

With many Web pages offering links to make donations for tsunami victims, charitable organizations already have received millions of dollars to support the relief effort.

But the efforts of people such as Conway and Walker put more than a little heart behind the money they raise to help the hungry and homeless in the wake of one of the worst natural disasters in modern history.

“I feel kind of proud that I thought about this myself and that I did something to help people who lost everything there,” Walker said.

“I feel good a little bit,” Conway said. “I know this is not much, but I feel so happy to be able to do something to help.”

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